The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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Omissions.

It isn't the things you do, dear,
  It's the things you leave undone,
Which gives you a bit of a heart-ache
  At the setting of the sun.
The tender word forgotten,
  The letter you did not write,
The flower you might have sent, dear,
  Are your haunting ghosts to-night.

The stone you might have lifted
  Out of a brother's way,
The bit of heartsome counsel
  You were hurried too much to say,
The loving touch of the hand, dear,
  The gentle and winsome tone
That you had no time nor thought for,
  With troubles enough of your own.

Those little acts of kindness,
  So easily out of mind,
Those chances to be angels
  Which even mortals find,—
They come in night and silence,
  Each chill, reproachful wraith,
When hope is faint and flagging,
  And the blight has dropped on faith.

For life is all too short, dear,
  And sorrow is all too great
To suffer our slow compassion
  That tarries until too late.
And it's not the things you do, dear,
  It's the things you leave undone,
Which gives you the bitter heart-ache
  At the setting of the sun.

M. E. SANGSTER.

God in Man.

BY JOHN HUNTER.

"*Quench not the Spirit.*"—1 THESS. v. 19.

THERE are some truths which we learn slowly and somewhat reluctantly. How slow we are to recognise and appreciate the significance of that lofty spiritual conception of God as the ever-present, indwelling Life of the world which in these days is making all things new. We think of God as far off, and as only present with the world, now and again, at certain points of time, and in certain places. We find it difficult to believe and realise that He is ever near; not only beyond the world, but in the world; not only the Ruler of man from without, but the pervading and quickening Spirit of his secret life.

It is not a mere dream of the poetic and devout mind that God is present everywhere in His universe, but a truth of reason and faith. The Divine immanence is the highest conception we can reach of the Divine relation to the world and life. Creation is instinct with the Spirit of God. In its laws and forces reside Divine Intelligence and Will. The things we see around us have no life of their own; in God they live and move. The loveliness of the world is the light of His countenance. He is the Power, the Wisdom, the Beauty, the Severity, the Gentleness, the Goodness we behold in nature.

But the Eternal Spirit who fills heaven and earth with His glory is present in a fuller and higher measure in man. We are God's kindred, says St. Paul. He is the Father of our spirits. His essential nature is our essential nature; His essential life is our essential life. There is something of God in every man—a germ of Divine life. There is not such a being as 'a mere man'—a man in whom there is no breath or spark of Godhead. The idea of the Incarnation is profoundly true: we only require to enlarge it. It is the end for which God reveals Himself that the Divine may live in the human, that God may dwell in man and man dwell in God. Not God in sacramental bread and wine, but God in man is the Real Presence.

In the sacred Scriptures we are bidden reverence ourselves, and reverence all men. And to do this we have only to know ourselves as we truly are. Let us believe in the indwelling God. Let us believe in that Divine inspiration which is the soul's native endowment, also in that Divine inspiration which is continually proffered, and by which our life may be quickened and unfolded immeasurably. Every impulse or yearning after good is an inpouring of the Divine Spirit into our spirits. We quench the Spirit of God when by our carelessness or neglect of self-discipline we allow anything that is good in us to fade away and perish—any natural faculty or aptitude, any true affection, any fine feeling, any right moral or religious impulse, any spiritual aspiration.

1. In the Bible such endowments as physical strength, mechanical skill, mental acuteness and wisdom are spoken of as the presence and inspiration of the Spirit of God in man. We do not, as a rule, think of the Divine Spirit as inspiring men to design buildings and furniture, to work in gold and silver and brass, to discover the secrets of Nature, and to administer national affairs. We confine the Most High to clerical, missionary and evangelistic affairs. Our life is practically atheistic, 'without God' except so far as the interests of the individual soul and of the Church are concerned. But the Bible is right, and our ordinary thought about ordinary life is wrong. We have nothing which we have not received. Every good gift cometh down from God. It is the inspiration of the present God which still enables men to do all manner of skilful work, to invent and plan and execute, to make discoveries and to think rightly. Must not this be the true and supreme end of all education and discipline,—so to quicken, develope and strengthen the natural faculties that they may be the fit instruments or channels through which the Divine Spirit may communicate His thought and reveal His will,—His thought and will, not only concerning ecclesiastical and purely religious matters, but concerning all the manifold interests of the wide human world in which we live?

We resist the Spirit when we do not make the most and the best of our natural endowments, or gifts; and we quench the Spirit when through the neglect of proper training and exercise we allow any such gifts to grow less and finally to die out,—as any gift will that is not wisely and constantly cultivated. Men quench the Spirit by allowing the sensual nature to act as a drag upon their energy. We have heard a master say of a workman: 'He is not the man he was, he has not the same power and skill since he took to drink.' We have heard much the same thing said of lawyers and doctors, artists, and preachers. We have seen with our own eyes indolence, intemperance, sensuality, the lust for money and social position, pride, envy and malice, injuring the finer capabilities of men, killing their intellectual force, and sometimes destroying that mysterous power or gift to which we give the name of genius. Now what does all this mean, when we look at things in the light of God? It means that this man and that man have been quenching the Spirit,—the power God gave them in order to be something, and to do something to serve their generation, and to be helpful to the world.

2. The Spirit of truth in man is the presence and activity in our thought and feeling of the God of truth. To resist the impulse that urges us to seek after truth is to resist the movement of the Divine mind in our minds; and to stifle conviction is to quench the Spirit. How effectually do worldliness and bigotry quench the Spirit of truth! All that many people want in life is money, or social position, or a comfortable and easy time of it; and possessed and ruled by such vulgar aims they have little care for truth. But selfishness is not always coarse; it is some-

times very refined, taking on plausible and subtle forms, and calling itself love of family and love of church. Too many men and women are lovers of themselves rather than lovers of truth. Let no selfish passion, no worldly aim, no sectarian ambition, no fear, no vanity, no prejudice, no love of quietness, no love of party or church ever tempt us to resist the Spirit of truth. Let us reverence and be loyal to conviction. It is the love of truth that brings salvation to the mind. Indifference to truth is atheism to God. God is the deepest self of every man. A man untrue to what is best in himself—to honest and serious conviction—is untrue to God.

3. The sense of right in man is the presence and movement of the Spirit, which he is exhorted not to quench. What is called conscience—that voice ri ing from the depths of our being, which speaks to us of duty, and troubles, if it does not destroy, the comfort of every excuse we can make for disobedience, is in truth what our fathers said it was—the voice of God—the utterance of an obligation we apprehend, but do not create. We resist, and are in danger of quenching the Spirit of God when we refuse to be led by our feeling of right, by our sense of duty, when we are disobedient to the whispers of conscience, to our inward drawings towards good, and our inward shrinkings from evil. The sense of right is the disclosure of obligation and the call to obedience. Conscience is not infallible, yet there is no surer way of getting to the real truth and right of things than by obedience to the highest and best we know. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. By obedience, by throwing ourselves into union with our feelings of right and making haste to obey them, we are certain to win the guidance we seek and need. But if we trifle with conscientious impulse, and scruple, and try to argue right that which is plainly wrong, we are in danger of committing the awful sin of quenching the Spirit of God; in danger of destroying the moral sense, and of turning the light that is in us to darkness.

4. The feelings which stand apart from our selfish cravings, and which urge us to help others; the impulses of love, pity, generosity, and sympathy, what are they but the presence and movement of the Divine Spirit in the human heart? Let us identify ourselves, not with our lower but with our higher nature; not with our selfish, but with our unselfish affections and impulses. Love is of God, for God is love. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Let us ever remember that we are free to cherish or to quench our highest impulses. The Divine action in and on man is not mechanical, but moral; it is not coercion, but impulse and suggestion; not compulsory force, but quickening influence. We can resist the Spirit of God,—resist wilfully and violently, and resist by our undesigned neglect and indifference.

5. We have moments and experiences in life when we feel God to be more than near, when we become acquainted with the capacities and possibilities of our nature and life, and we apprehend what is meant by the essential unity of God and man, and realise the communion of the Holy Spirit. Trifle, forget, and disobey as we may, yet we have our serious hours. We are not the petty, superficial creatures we sometimes take one another to be. Not only around us, but within us there is the mystery of God. Our nature is deeper than we know, or are capable of knowing. Our littleness and shallowness are only seeming. Mind, heart, and soul draw their life from infinite sources. We are related to all that is most Divine in the universe. And we have experiences which make us aware of all this; experiences awful yet glorious with indwelling God, and which bring with them new and wonderful accessions of spiritual light and impulse. The worldly mind, considered in itself, may be enmity against God; but men of the world are not wholly worldly. They have their deeper and better moments,—moments of inspiration, of self-surprise and self-revelation.

> No man can think, nor in himself perceive,
> Sometimes at waking, in the street sometimes,
> Or, on the hillside, always unforewarned
> A grace of finer being, a larger life upon
> His own impinging, to which his own seems
> But thick cloud to make that visible
> Touched by a sudden glory round the edge.

Such inspirations we all have, hours of moral exaltation when the Spirit of God breathes upon our life, and kindles to a warm glow the fires of spiritual affection and impulse. Let us obey these heavenly visions. Let us have the

courage to live by the truest and highest revealed to us. The life of our best hours and experiences is our true life. Not to strive to make these best hours the standard by which we daily live, to be disloyal to that which we see and worship and love in the most exalted and most radiant moments of our existence, to make no effort to preserve and perpetuate the glory of this occasional spiritual life, is to resist and quench the Spirit.

A Round Table Conference.

AN EXTENDED LECTIONARY.

V.

To many minds the Bible is almost a synonym for religion, and to read a chapter selected from it at haphazard is "teaching religion." In some respects we Unitarians have passed out of this fetich worship, but in our church services we are still, with few exceptions, rigidly bound by it. It is not, indeed, now upheld on the only logical ground, viz., that the Bible is the sole, inspired, literal word of God; but it is urged that as the Bible is, on the whole, the best collection of religious teachings in existence, therefore we should exclude all others from our services. Your correspondent, Mr. Dean, has well pointed out that we do not reject for the feeding of our bodies all but the most nutritious and concentrated foods; neither should we do well to banish every poet but Shakespeare from our libraries: and although we are assured by Mr. Snell that the greatest modern authors are deeply indebted to and saturated with "the spirit of the Bible" (a term surely somewhat rash in its comprehensiveness!), he would hardly maintain further that that spirit has gained nothing precious for us in its interpretation by Goethe, Burns, Scott, Ruskin, Carlyle, Tennyson or any of the other masters he cites. "There is nothing in Ruskin" says Mr. Snell, "which is not the developement of a few germs in the Pentateuch and the Gospel." Perhaps. But shall we therefore deny to our spiritual life the unfolding of those germs by the master whose words are a gospel to many of us?

It is hardly in accordance with the educational spirit of our time to convince people of the superiority of one set of religious writings by with-holding opportunities for comparing them with others; and certainly in the religious writings of other races we frequently meet with some familiar lesson of faith or morality clothed in words and images which invest it with a new vitality for us. Can we possibly be the better for looking on the Jewish race as the only one with which we have a community of religious ideas? Is it not good for us to be reminded of our religious sympathy with the great minds of *all* races and ages? We are assured by a Christian Bishop that "most of the moral truths prescribed by the Gospel are to be met with in the Buddhist scriptures;" and it will do us no harm when uttering Christ's prayer, "not my will but Thine be done," to remember the similar words of the "heathen" philosopher Epictetus—"I am always content with that which happens, for I think that what God chooses is better than what I choose." It is not that we expect to find in the scriptures of other nations any essentially new and original truths not to be found in our Bible. The thoughts which most strongly quicken and influence us are never wholly new; but they are presented to us in some fresh garb which reveals their perennial beauty in a new aspect. This is all that the greatest poets and prophets have done or can do for us.

Modern preaching is concerning itself more and more with the problems and interests of modern life; and while admitting that the application of the elemental truths and lessons of our own and other sacred scriptures can never be outlived, we neverthless often feel the want of a continuous line of thought throughout our services, which might be supplied had our preachers power to illustrate by the lessons they read the central ideas of their sermons, so bringing the minds of their hearers into accord with their own. A service in which readings, music, sermon and even prayers are in harmony, carrying on and developing a continuous train of thought or feeling, is surely more likely to enlist the sympathy and interest of a congregation than a succession of possibly beautiful but isolated ideas, following each other without cohesion.

CATHERINE C. OSLER.

VI.

The reasons for and against an extension of our Church Lectionary have been so well stated in the papers which have appeared in the last two numbers of the *Seed Sower*, that there is little left to say upon the subject, especially as the position and experience of the writers give them a claim to be listened to with deference. The only reason for adding anything to what has already been said, is that our ministers wish for some expressions of opinion on the matter from members of their congregations.

I think that an increasing number of our worshippers are coming to feel that the introduction of other literature than the Bible into our services would be welcome. To myself, such a change appears reasonable, though I feel reluctant to break with the old custom which long association has made dear. It must be admitted that our present practice with regard to the "Lessons" in our church services is inconsistent with our teaching as to the inspiration of the Bible. If we hold that the writers of its books were not inspired in a different manner from the teachers and poets who have spoken of God before or since their time, and that the saints of the Bible—(I would except Jesus, whose union with the Father still seems to me to transcend that of any other man)—were no nearer to Him than those of other times and countries, then it is neither consistent nor desirable to exclude from our worship the help of their teachings or the records of their lives. To take one instance, Mr. Priestley Evans speaks of reading from "In Memoriam" in the pulpit. I think that there are but two chapters in the Bible so capable of touching the heart in time of loss and strengthening the conviction of immortality as are the strains of that magnificent poem.

The previous writers in this Conference have expressed what I also feel—that the Bible will not suffer when placed side by side with other devotional literature It is wonderfully rich in expressions of devout and earnest faith. We have scarcely reached a diviner height of joyful trust than did the writer of Psalm ciii., or a sterner sense of the claims of righteousness than did the later prophets. Few collections of books could have stood so well the test of being placed in the unique position which the Bible has so long held. Perhaps we shall more appreciate the beauty of its lessons when they are less matters of routine, and shall perceive how much of that which appeals to us in later writers is grounded upon them.

This routine use of the Bible does it injustice, as does also the invariable reading of so difficult a literature, remote as to time and place and language, without note or comment. Often a passing word of explanation would make clear some passage which for want of it has either a conventional meaning, or none at all, for the hearers.

In conclusion, may I plead that it should be remembered that, while to a large number of our worshippers the introduction of other literature would add to the interest of the services, and remove a stumbling-block to their sense of consistency, there is another section—and these not the least devout—to whom it would be distasteful and painful. Do we not all know some to whom the admission of any other book to the same position as the Bible in public worship would be to concede an important principle, and would mar the sacredness of the associations of the hour of prayer. Therefore, I think that where this innovation is contemplated it should be brought about gradually; the extra-Biblical lessons should be the exception and not the rule, and care should be taken to chose such as do not appeal only to one section or school of thought, but are calculated to touch and kindle the religious life of all.

LOUISA PRIESTLEY SMITH.

VII.

Dear Editors,—Will you kindly allow a layman to sit down at your table and give expression to the views of the congregation, that *corpus vile* on which ministers make their experiments, and students try their 'prentice hands? I see that two of your number at the table claim the right to make this change from Biblical to extra-Biblical lessons without consulting the congregation. Is not this a little like the new High Church Vicar, who thrusts an offensive ritual, willy nilly, upon a congregation brought up in evangelical ways of worship? That case we call high-handedness. What is the other? The sermon is undoubtedly the ministers, but surely

the congregation have some rights in the service!

It is my lot to have suffered much from extra-Biblical lessons, and my experience is that not one minister in ten can make them judiciously. We know where we are with the Bible—the best and the worst of it. But what are we to say to Bret Harte and Charles Dickens in lieu of the Bible, or even Carlyle, Bryant, and Pope? Imagine the indignation of these men at being placed in juxtaposition with Isaiah and John. To have the 23rd Psalm, or the parable of the Good Samaritan, followed by an extract from Matthew Arnold, is like gravel in the mouth. And what a pretty tap of scorn Arnold would have turned on such a *bêtise*. Or, if we use the old Eastern and classical writers we find ourselves in a different atmosphere from the Christian. They represent phases of life and religion lower than ours. It is Quietism, or Stoicism—grave, earnest, stern, pathetic, but not cheerful, not rejoicing, not child-like, happy-hearted trust—in a word, not Christian.

Mr. Dean makes much of the point that he is bound to shew in his Lectionary the belief all Unitarians hold in common, that the inspiration of God extends beyond the four covers of that book we call the Bible. Principle and consistency demand this of him. Why? I believe God gives the black rye bread of the Norwegian peasant as truly as he gives the white wheaten bread of the Englishmen. But I do not choose to eat rye bread in order to witness to my belief that it comes from God. I eat always wheaten bread, *the best I can get*. I will not use the second best while the first best is at hand, although both are God's gifts. I believe the Pimpermel, and the Meadow-sweet, and the Ragged-robin, reveal God to the loving mind as much as the Rose and Chrysanthemum. But I do not choose to have these wild flowers, beautiful as they are, in my garden. I will have there *the best I can get*. Now I observe that both Mr. Dean and Mr. Street fully admit that our Bible is, after all, easily first among the Bibles of the world. Why, then, should I be asked in public worship to put up with less than the first? I want *the best I can get*, not the second best. In private I sometimes use these inferior Bibles, but in public worship we surely need the uplifting power of the noblest words we can find. Further, if these words are hallowed by a thousand sacred memories of home and childhood, and sweet and bitter experiences of life; if they come to us with the burden of 2000 years of saintly testimony, it is a poor business to set them aside for something which, however good, is entirely devoid of the soft and tender colouring lent by such associations.

Does Mr. Beard require defence? I trow not. Some measure of intelligence must be supposed on the part of any congregation, and our people at least understand that by reading them in church a minister is by no means endorsing as facts the lovely myths in which the Bible abounds. When Mr. Dean reads in the Psalms, "There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it,' does he stop to explain that this is not an exact statement of anything that really occurred? Does he not understand that most folks are poets enough to know that a poet is speaking? Or when he reads the graphic account of what happened in the valley of dry bones, does he really think it a duty to explain that no such valley ever existed, but that we have here an allegory? Are people fools, that they cannot discern for themselves between the letter and the spirit? Does Mr. Dean ever sing the noble hymn (by a Unitarian), "It came upon the midnight clear," and stop to point out that no choir of angels ever really carolled over Bethlehem? The myths which grew up around the story of the birth of Jesus arose out of the devout imaginations and fervour of early disciples. Can we not use them as the poetical expression of our rejoicing in that birth, without pausing, like a superior pupil-teacher, to say, "This, observe, is myth—and this is history." If a dull one here and there needs this treatment, so be it; but, in heaven's name, don't let ministers be so morbidly sensitive about their consistency, as to give way to a habit all sensible people would find very provoking. It is a trenchant saying of Emerson's, "Consistency is the bugbear of little minds."

Pardon, dear editors, this intrusion. It is only

A VOICE FROM THE BACK PEW.

VIII.

DEAR MR. EDITOR.

I have hung my half of the editorial cloak out of the window for a few minutes in order that I may write freely, but briefly, on the question of an extended Lectionary.

First of all let me correct a misquotation in the letter from "A Voice from the Back Pew." Your correspondent rather sneers at Mr. Dean for his account of his own consistency, and ends with the remark, Emerson said, "Consistency is the bugbear of little minds." Pardon me, dear "Voice from a Back Pew," Emerson never said anything so silly. There never was a more nobly consistent man than Emerson, and to have said that consistency is the bugbear of little minds would have been to stultify his own conduct. His words were, "A *foolish* consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." The word I have italicised makes a great difference, and indeed, the whole argument in the essay on "Self-reliance" tells much more heavily against "A Voice from the Back Pew," than it tells against Mr. Dean. I am not concerned to defend Mr. Dean. He is alive and can speak for himself. But such a gross misquotation of Emerson is a counterfeit coin which I take the liberty of nailing to the counter at once.

I agree with those who say that in the Jewish scriptures we have the highest and best expressions of religious emotion in the world. This, however, only applies to parts of those scriptures. The Book of Job, most of the Psalms, many chapters from Proberbs and the Prophets are unequalled, in spite of the frequent admixture of local allusion which is unintelligble to the bulk of our congregations. The local allusion may be useful in a chapter from which the text is taken, if it is made the basis of a brief exposition intended to lead up to the subject of the sermon. But when it occurs in a chapter read merely as a lesson, it conveys no meaning to most hearers, and should the reader stop to expound, in his reading, he destroys its *devotional* power.

Admitting, then, the superiority for devotional reading of parts of the Bible, I ask wherein the superiority consists? Is it inherent in these books, independent of form, or has the form a good deal to do with it? My training compelled me to read the Bible, both in the original, and in translations more exact than the Authorised Version. I am bound to say that I do not find either the charm or devotional power predominant except in the version used in our churches. If an authorised version had to be made now, I fear that we could not say so much for the Bible as a devotional book, as we can say at present. One has only to note what a mess the learned Revisors of a few years ago made of many passages, to understand how much we owe to the stately simplicity of King James's translators. It is the charm of noble, simple language that goes to our hearts. Frequent listening to it creates a sentiment in favour of it—a sentiment which is apt to be shocked by hearing the same thoughts read in language less lofty and pure. This, I think, is the whole point of the opposition to an extended Lectionary.

Anyone who believes in the Bible as our orthodox friends do, may find many other reasons against reading lessons from books other than the Old and New Testaments. But from our standpoint, the opposition lies where I have stated. We preach and believe that God inspires men now as he inspired them of old. Yet we shrink from listening to any inspiration which is not uttered by Biblical writers! Surely, sentiment apart, the opposition is rather irrational. At any rate, we can hardly claim to have the courage of our convictions.

There is another matter which has scarcely been touched in this Conference. The *expression* of religious feeling has been the main theme, and if every member of the congregation is in a devotional frame of mind, that is all that need concern us. But in every congregation there are some who need to be roused from indifference or callousness—need to be made conscious of higher interests than those which fill their minds, to be *inspired* for devotion. The sermon ought to do this? Granted. But if the preacher has read some powerful passage from a great author, which leads up to his subject, he has probably roused some of his hearers before he begins to preach and finds their minds prepared for his own words. Now there are phases of modern life which cannot be got at by any chapter of the Bible, because the local colour is so different in these days from what it was in ancient

Palestine. And if the preacher knows of a poem, or a page of prose, which bears directly upon a phase of modern life with which he wishes to deal, I cannot understand why he should be forbidden to read it as a lesson.

It is a practical difficulty after all, and if by an extended Lectionary we are to understand a book of extracts from the religious Literatures of the world, made by some more or less competent individual, I should object to it altogether. The selection of extra-Biblical lessons should be made by the preacher himself; his choice should be dictated by the need of the hour; and if he has no special reason for his choice, let him stick to the Bible. Even then, there are practical difficulties in the way. If, *e.g.*, a minister were to read a poem of Swinburne's or Whitman's, I should think very well of myself, if I sat still. And I quite see that the antipathy which I feel towards these writers may be felt by others towards writers whom I love, and in whom I have found inspiration. So that, perhaps, the best course is to base any new departure in the direction of an extended Lectionary upon an agreement between minister and congregation. Only do not let us suppose that there is any principle involved in reading Lessons merely from the Bible. The *principle* is all the other way.

I am, Sir, sincerely yours,

JAMES CROSSLEY.

The Silent Harp.

Poor harp, how desolate!—The loving hand,
That wind-like wandered o'er thy tremulous strings,
Culling sweet sheaves of sound or whisperings
Æolian, at the Master's mute command
Drops lifeless. In that unresponsive land
What music He from earthly sufferings
Evoketh and the stress of mortal things,
Wistful we seek but may not understand.
Yonder may dwell continual peace, but here
All peace begetteth and is born of strife,
And every smile is sister to a tear;
Death only can the missing note supply
To quite resolve the discord of this life;
Silence alone is perfect harmony.

ALFRED HAYES.

On solitary souls, the universe
Looks down inhospitable; the human heart
Finds nowhere shelter but in human kind.

G. Eliot.

Have we any right to be cheerful?

The wise ones of the hour, happily of the hour only, our *fin de Siécle* critics and philosophers who assume that their's is the last word to be said about life, seem to be settling down to the dreary conviction that creation on the whole has been a blunder, of which we men and women are paying the penalty. The Pessimist view of nature—nay, of man himself,—his past and his future, is now in the ascendant. These prophets of ours have the keenest eye for the sad side of things. They assure us that this is a clumsily-constructed world. One of them takes to pieces the human eye, and proves how foolish it was of the Almighty not to have consulted *him* in its design, since he could have suggested several improvements on the eye as it is. Another tells us that what we call Creation is the result of an act of blind folly on the part of the Unconscious, whereby a hardly tolerable world has got itself shaped. A third gravely asks, "Is life worth living?" and comes to the conclusion that man is a miserable creature, that life is a vexation and a weariness, and that it would be better never to have been born. "The boundless clinging to life," says Schopenhauer, "cannot be attributed to knowledge and reflection; in the view of these it is an insanity." All are agreed that, while man may at the worst be desperate or indulgent, and at the best cynical or stoical, he has no right to be cheerful.

We have to recognise, however, that Pessimism is no new nineteenth-century disease. It is as old as the hills. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is a prominent note in all Eastern religions. Pessimism forms the essence of Brahmanism and Buddhism; it is at the bottom of Greek and Roman Stoicism; age after age it reappears like some disease, and that it is a disease we see in the melancholia of Cowper, and the reckless fatalism of Byron.

Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen;
Count o'er thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better not to be.

So says the poet, whose only notion of cheerfulness is the roysterous life of a Don Juan.

Now, it must be admitted that if we persistently look at only one side of the world and

life, the pessimistic is a very natural view. Men bowed down by bodily pain, vexed by family cares, troubled by the frequent success of wrong-doing, sickened by sore bereavements, burdened by losses and crosses, fainting from ill-requited toil, often baffled, often disappointed, find it easy to think that life is a bad business, and that the dead are better off than the living. When, further, we mark Nature, "red in tooth and claw," the beasts of prey, the tornadoes and earthquakes, the malaria of the swamp, the fury of the storm, which sends many a tall ship to the bottom, and overwhelms good and bad without discrimination in a common wreck; when we note how full nature is of frustrated endeavour and wasted effort, so that of a hundred seeds only one is fruitful, of whole ranks and orders of creatures born, as it seems, for untimely ruin, then we need not wonder at the appearance of the Pessimistic doctrine.

But to fasten our attention on that side of nature only, to the neglect of her bright, beneficent, happy-making work is like blotting out the sun by holding a sixpence up to the eye. The dark side of creation cannot be ignored, but when a large and healthy view of the whole is taken into account, "the glory of the sum of things will flash along the clouds and go." Men know full well that life is not all sadness, pain, and vexation. Whether preached by Calvinism, Pessimism, or Agnosticism, the great beating heart of the human race has never believed in the gospel of despair. When I was a boy the following was a favourite hymn in our chapel:—

How vain are all things here below,
How false and yet how fair!
Each pleasure hath its poison too,
And every sweet a snare.

The brightest things below the sky
Give but a fleeting light:
We should suspect some danger nigh
When we receive delight.

Now this degraded rubbish is no better from the lips of Dr. Watts than from the lips of Oscar Wilde, and it is curious how a false theology, and a revolting, cynical philosophy meet on the same ground, and find a common topic in abusing the sweet, simple pleasures of life. It is sad to think that a hymn like this should have been a creed with many—with creatures living in a world in which there are roses and lilies, sunsets and sunrise, vineyards and orchards, children and women, running waters and sapphire skies, human heroism and the noble things of art.

When we look, however, at the Pessimism of to-day, we see that it is nearly related to the sad agnostic temper which has fallen upon the end of the nineteenth century. Pessimism and Agnosticism act and re-act on each other. If all is wrong here, if pain and evil are in the ascendant, then indeed it is hard to believe in God at all. On the other hand, if there be no faith in God, it is easy to think that everything is a mistake—impossible to reconcile the course of things with right and justice—and we are driven to the conviction that this is a rudderless world, without any intelligible meaning, and that all the prophets have only added to its misery by setting up false ideals—none more so than Jesus. This is the burden of that remarkable poem of Mr. Buchanan's, which has given rise to so much discussion. "Christianity," says Mr. Buchanan, "is a failure because it has made the world sad." Speaking of Jesus, he writes—

This Jew hath made the earth, that once was glad,
A lazar-house of woful men and mad.

He notes the martyrdoms, the persecutions, the tyranny of priesthoods, the misereres of the church, the troubled conscience, the more serious view of life introduced by Christianity, running now and again into austerities and Puritanism, and he contrasts with this the gaiety, the frank enjoyment, the unconsciousness of wrong doing in the ancient Pagan world. But again, the view is too limited. Is the world, as Christianity has shaped it sadder and worse off than the world as Christianity found it? It may be so to the Oscar Wildes and Robert Buchanans, who want to sit at the table of life crowned with roses and vine-leaves, and be as free from the prickings of conscience as the old Pagans. But does any sensible man with any feeling for righteousness desire back the world into which Christianity first entered? The Roman Empire was then at the zenith of its power: the "splendours of the sense" to which Mr. Buchanan refers were never so superb, material prosperity never so lavishly displayed, nor were the triumphs of the human intellect ever more imposing. But at that very moment the human race touched the lowest point in its degradation. Beneath the splendid surface there was the

most hideous rottenness, the most abominable crime the world has ever seen. The proud Roman people itself had parted with its authority to monsters—Neros and others—whom it elevated to the rank of gods, in return for being glutted with food and the orgies of the circus. "Not one principle of regeneration, not one fertile idea, not one seed of hope could be found in that great ancient world. It was in such a state of society that Christianity came to pour into the souls of men the healing elixir of the Sermon on the Mount. From that hour to this every vivifying influence which has possessed society, advanced civilization, and elevated the dignity of man, owes its origin to Christianity." The very passion for humanity, which Mr. Buchanan makes so much of, and tries to set over in opposition to the gospel of Jesus, is born of Christianity. Humanity, pity, the belief in the preciousness of man as man were unknown in that world wide empire. Think of it—a world without pity! In all that great city of Rome there was not a single hospital, nor orphanage, nor institution for the relief of the poor! And when we count up the undoubted wrongs and miseries, which have often attended Christianity and defaced it; when we call to mind the bigotries, priestcrafts, and austerities of the church, we have to remember the illimitable background of homes and hearts sweetened, refined, and uplifted by the Christian faith, the sense of humanity which it has quickened, the immense amount of happiness of which the gospel has been the source, the peace and joy, the grace and truth, the rest and hope, the light and love which have accompanied its ministrations, and made the sad, weary heart of man rejoice.

As on a large view of life as a whole, we see that the beneficent forces far outweigh the evil, so I believe that there are very few lives indeed in which pleasure is not abundantly more than pain. It is just because they are occasional, and break the ordinary routine of comfort, that pains are so noticeable; it is just because they are so familiar and common that pleasures pass unappreciated. But let a man watch himself all day long, and mark the thousand touches of happiness that delight him in the four-and-twenty hours: the dawn, good health, children's laughter, loving faces at the table, enough to eat, the fleecy clouds, the blue sky, the blowing rose in his garden, his wife's love, his friend's goodwill, the delight of books, the glow of satisfaction in work well done, the play of mind in human fellowship, the grandeur of duty, the sweetness of charity, the tenderness of the sunset, the glory of the artist, the lilt of music, the merriment of social intercourse, the confidence of employers or clients, the sight of a field o buttercups tossed to and fro in the wind, the smell of new-mown hay, the admiration excited by some tale in the newspaper of human heroism—why every moment brings its benediction. I do not forget the sad things also—the pain, want, and care, the heartaches and bereavements. And yet, sorrow and sadness are on the surface of things, while joy is at the heart and centre; sorrow springs from circumstance, gladness is of the essence of life—and therefore sorrow is transitory while gladness is perennial. Heavy clouds pass across the sky, but the permanent element is the heavenly blue. Sorrows come and go, but the permanent background of life is blessing.

In spite of crimes and tragedies, pains and deceits, sins and sadness, the ways of life for most men are pleasant. All the greatest souls have confessed it. If you want a cheerful, hopeful view of life go to Shakespeare, Martin Luther, Milton, Wordsworth, Isaiah, Paul; go to the world's great workers and singers. I know the world has its Dantes and Carlyles also, but these are, after all, only moods—passing moods—in the life of that great Titan—Humanity. Its constant, persistent saving elements have been full of sunshine and cheerfulness.

So the practical conclusion of the whole matter is this:—Make up your minds as to the worth of life in your brightest moments, and keep on remembering in sad moments your former judgment.

JOSEPH WOOD.

Slow work of faith for months and years,
Slow toil of love, with prayers and tears
Slow patience of the hope divine,
Precept on precept, line on line,
Ere from old fields of sin,
God's harvest is brought in!

W. C. SMITH.

Concerning Charm.

A WORD FOR WOMEN.

A French writer has said that a woman's first duty is to be charming. He kindly goes on to explain that this does not necessarily depend on good looks and a graceful figure, nor on witty speech and a vicacious manner; still less has it anything to do with that view of things indicated by the fashionable lady who said that the consciousness of being well dressed gave her a peace of mind which the consolations of religion could not bestow. To be charming does not imply a pretty face, nor a pretty frock, though these may add to it a touch of colour. Briefly, this desirable quality, our instructor informs us, is the power of taking and showing a warm sympathetic interest in others:—not in others in the mass but individually. Now this is not a common quality. Many women are sympathetic but they lack the power to *show* it. As a rule the very clever woman—the woman with a mission, the woman who is a leader in some movement of the day, the woman who is absorbed in some study or reform—is deficient in charm. She is so much taken up with her own special pursuit, mission, or art, that she has no time and no sympathy for ordinary individuals. She can be interesting enough on her own line, unless she is a bore, but you soon perceive that she has no interest in *you!* And no woman is felt to be charming unless her companion for the time being is made to feel that he is interesting to her, that she thinks something of him, and manifests by her manner sympathy with him. There are women of no public position and no great intellectual gifts who are yet great favourites. How is it? They have that indescribable thing called charm. When they sit down beside you they seem to invite confidence. They can do that rare thing—listen well. There are women who can talk but cannot listen. Speak to them of *your* affairs and their eyes begin to wander, they answer irrelevantly and soon bring back the conversation to the only thing they really care for, their own concerns, or else find excuse for going. But a good listener makes you respect yourself. You feel that you are interesting to him, and so in a moment he is interesting to you. A discussion took place not long ago, in one of our weekly newspapers, on the want of "charm" among actresses. It was said that only Mrs. Kendal and Miss Ellen Terry of all Englishwomen on the stage could be said to have "charm," and a dramatic critic pointed out that these two were almost our only actresses who could listen. Their eyes did not wander, they did not fidget about some detail of costume; they were intent, absorbed, deeply interested in the tale being told. Their interest communicated itself to the audience and awoke sympathy. It may be the criticism was unfair to other actresses, but certainly in common life the woman who shows that she is listening to you, interested in you, sympathetic with you, is the woman above all others you feel to be charming.

No more fascinating creation of modern fiction can be found than "Cecilia de Noel." The authoress says of her, "It was as if every man, woman, and child who approached her became instantly to her more interesting than herself, their defects more tolerable, their wants more imperative, their sorrows more moving than her own. In this lay the source of that mysterious charm so many have felt, so few have understood, yielding to which even those least capable of appreciating her confessed that whatever her conduct might be she herself was irresistibly lovable." No doubt this air of interest and sympathy may sometimes be simulated, so that you have the suspicion you have only been fooled in thinking that your fair companion was really giving you her mind and a place in her heart. The eager, absorbed attention to what you are saying is only a manner and has no reality behind it. You are flattered for the moment and there is an end of it. But the woman who is not less but more than all the sympathy she seems to be draws every one to her with a delight which is not deceptive. Was there ever a more beautiful instance of the temper of mind here indicated than that given by Oliver Wendell Holmes of a beautiful woman at an evening party, in a sumptuous drawing room, asking of her own accord if she might be introduced to a raw, awkward, desolate young man, who nobody seemed to know or speak to. He was ill-dressed and ill at ease—a sort of social mendicant, and for that very reason this sympathetic woman had compassion on him, chatted with him full twenty minutes, set him

at ease, drew him out till he became proud and radiant, and before she left him had made him feel that he was somebody of interest to the loveliest woman in the room. She had distilled her soft words upon him like dew upon a green herb. It is a noble story, none the less so because this sympathetic woman was decked out in pearls and diamonds. But it is my belief that every woman has got it in her to be charming in exactly the same manner. Only it needs culture. By attending to it the sympathetic element may be strengthened until it becomes natural and easy to take an interest in the people we meet, and to pour out upon them the charm of a loving disposition. DELTA.

News from the Field.

Our Senior Editor, Mr. Wood, desires to return thanks to his numerous friends of the "Seed Sower" who have sent many messages of sympathy during his illness, and whom he finds it impossible to answer individually. Mr. Wood is now recruiting at the seaside, and hopes to resume work on Sunday, June 11th.

KIDDERMINSTER.—On Sunday, May 7th, the annual Church Parade of the various Friendly Societies of the town was held, followed by service in the New Meeting Chapel. There was a large attendance, and Mr. Evans preached a suitable sermon. Some of the Churchmen in the town protested against the service being held in the Unitarian Chapel, with the result that there was a larger attendance and a better collection than usual. On the following Sunday, May 14th, the 108th Sunday School Anniversary Services were held. The preacher was the Minister of the New Meeting, Rev. E. D. P. Evans. The congregations were large and appreciative. In the afternoon a Service of Song was given by the scholars, assisted by the choir. The collections realised £17.

WE note, with satisfaction, the two following items. At SHREWSBURY a short time ago, a funeral took place in the Nonconformist Ground of the general Cemetery. In the Official Register of the cemetery the words "unconsecrated ground" were written by the clerk of the Burial Board. The funeral was conducted by a Church of England parson, who wrote under the clerk's entry the words "Special Consecration." The special consecration, we suppose, consisted in the presence of a parson of "Dear Old Mother Church." But it is illegal for the officiating minister to tamper with the register in this way, and the Rev. E. Myers brought the matter before the Burial Board (of which he is a member). The Board ordered the "Special Consecration" entry to be cancelled.

AT the LYE, a Parish Meeting was held a week or two ago, to elect three members for the Burial Board. Our Minister, Rev. I. Wrigley, was at the head of the poll.

FAZELEY STREET MISSION.—The Sunday School Anniversary was held on Sunday, May 14th. Mr. A. H. Wilson conducted the morning service, which was mainly for the children. In the evening, the Rev. T. Pipe officiated. The chapel, even with chairs and forms in the aisles, was not large enough to hold all who wished to join in the service. Some late comers were not able to gain admission. The service was bright and cheerful, and we need not add the attendance very encouraging to the minister and friends of the Mission. We think the result is one to be proud of, yet our correspondent writes "that no report can give an adequate idea of the heartiness and splendid enthusiasm which characterised our gatherings."

KINGSWOOD.—On Sunday, May 14th, the Flower Services were held here, and the Chapel looked unusually pretty with its tasteful floral decorations. A number of specially selected hymns had been printed for the occasion and added greatly to the enjoyment of the services. The anthems were "Consider the Lilies" and "For the love that all things made." The subject of the morning sermon was "Loving God," and of the evening "Mine and Thine." After morning service the annual business meeting was held and the treasurer's accounts were received and passed, and the officers for the year were elected. We are happy in being able to report that we are now quite free from debt, the whole cost of the new school having been raised, and that we begin the new financial year with a small balance in hand.

WEST BROMWICH.—On Wednesday evening, May 10th, a social gathering was held in the Schoolroom, for the purpose of recognising in a substantial form the services of Mr. Arthur Underhill, who was for 19 years secretary to Church, but has recently resigned that position.—On behalf of the congregation the Chairman (Mr. S. Greenway) presented to Mr. Underhill a very handsome timepiece, bearing a suitable inscription. On making the presentation, he briefly reviewed the history of the Unitarian cause in West Bromwich, and spoke of the active and energetic support which Mr. Underhill had given to that cause in the capacity of secretary, and also, for part of the time, as treasurer. The presentation, he said, was intended as a substantial proof of the congregation's appreciation of those services—(applause)—and in the unavoidable absence of Mr. J. A. Kenrick and Mr. Caddick, he had the pleasant duty of being the medium for expressing the congregation's indebtedness to Mr. Underhill for his nineteen years' service—(applause).—Mr. Harrison supplemented the Chairman's review of the history of the Church, and added his testimony to the value of the services which Mr. Underhill had rendered.—Mr. F. T. Jefferson said he was commissioned to express the regret of both Mr. J. Arthur Kenrick and Mr. Edward Caddick at their inability to be present to join in the tribute to Mr. Underhill's worth. Personally, he earnestly re-echoed the sentiments of the previous speakers. He had known Mr. Underhill for a quarter of a century as a loyal and active supporter of Liberal principles, both in politics and religion—(applause).—Mr. Underhill, in cordially thanking his

friends, said the services he had rendered had been rendered voluntarily, without hope of reward, and because of his interest in the cause—(applause). He alluded to the first services held in connection with Unitarianism in West Bromwich, held in a room placed at their disposal by Mr. Kenrick, and remarked that he had been connected with the cause in West Bromwich really from its starting point—(hear, hear). In concluding he again thanked them for the presentation, which he assured them he should value very highly—(applause).—Subsequently Mr. W. T. Jackson delivered a brief address, in the course of which he added his testimony as to the useful work Mr. Underhill had done. —At intervals during the evening a programme of songs, recitations, &c., was well given and heartily appreciated. —*Children's Guild Entertainment*: A very successful entertainment was given in the Schoolroom, on Wednesday evening, May 3rd, in connection with the Guild of St. Francis. Mr. Harrison, in the course of a few introductory remarks, said the object of the guild was mainly to promote kindness and helpfulness in the daily life of the children, and that there were at present about 20 members (girls), who at their fortnightly meetings made garments of various kinds for distribution amongst the poor. This guild is doing very good work under the superintendence of Miss Hetty Greenway, and the success of the entertainment was evidently due to her careful and patient training of the children.—A special musical service was given in the Chapel on Sunday evening, May 14th. Schubert's "Song of Miriam" was excellently rendered by the choir, the solos being well sung and the chorus throughout was steady and effective.

CRADLEY.—The Annual Sermon on behalf of the schools was preached by Rev. J. Crossley, on May 14th. As usual there was a large congregation, friends being present from Birmingham, Lye, and Stourbridge.

BANBURY.—The Annual Meeting of the congregation was held after the evening service on May 7th. After the usual reports had been read, a discussion followed, from which it appeared that there was every reason to look forward to the future with hope and confidence. At the close of the formal proceedings, the Rev. H. Hill read a letter from Mr. Blurton—now in New Zealand for the benefit of his health—who was a steady worker in the Church for several years. The letter gave great pleasure to Mr. Blurton's many friends.

Editorial Jottings.

IN our next issue we hope to publish an article by Dr. Crosskey on the question of "Religious Teaching in Elementary Schools." It is becoming increasingly clear that the Church Party intend to get the control of the Board Schools into their own hands, if it be possible, and to use these schools for sectarian purposes. Fortunately, it is also growing clearer to Liberal educationists that the only logical and safe course for them is to object to religious teaching in these schools altogether. The amendment moved to a clause of Dr. Crosskey's resolution at the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (and accepted by him) is significant. The amendment ran, "That in order to secure religious equality it shall not be competent for School Boards to provide for the teaching of either religion or theology." Religious teaching in Elementary Schools is only defensible when all who contribute to their support are of one mind. As soon as rates are levied on people holding different theological views, the religious teaching ought to be dropped. It cannot be continued without injustice to one or other of the religious denominations. Conscience clauses, compromises and other similar inanities are useless to prevent propogandism. We rejoice to note signs that the Liberals mean to take a strong course at last. The battle may be long, but the cause of civil and religious liberty will triumph in the end if we are all earnest and determined. We trust our readers will pay the greatest attention to Dr. Crosskey's article, and will rouse themselves for action. A lady once said to her son: "My son, you should love your enemies." "Catch me at it," replied the boy. The Church Party have been of a mind with this young hopeful for a long time in educational matters. Let us imitate them and go into the question as if we meant business.

WE have been obliged to hold over two or three letters on the question of an "Extended Lectionary." A great deal of interest is taken in some of our churches in the matter, that is to say, in those churches where only the Bible is read. We should like our lay friends to join in and tell us what they are thinking. Two ladies have kindly favoured us with letters in this issue. We shall be glad to have the views of other ladies or gentlemen.

The overburdened man scarcely has the desire to love, far less the time. We always seek *things* at the expense of persons; and the man who *works* too much must *love* too little.—*Richter.*

Notes for Sunday School Lessons.

FROM J. R. LOWELL'S POEMS.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4th.

MAHMOOD, THE IMAGE-BREAKER: OR, NO COMPROMISE.

Read Pro. i., 7-16; Matt. iv., 1-11; Acts v. 27-29 & 40-42.

Mahmood was at Sumnat, sorely tempted. He stood in a great Temple, before an idol, whose fixed, stony look awed him for a moment. The priests, taking courage from his hesitation, knelt to him, and offered gold and precious stones if he would spare their god. He was tempted to spare just this one idol. Short reflection showed him that if he sold that block of marble, he must sell his truth and conscience with it. Wealth and rule might slip away, but

He who keeps his faith, he only cannot be discrowned.

Mahmood decided that he could not take the proferred ransom. With his iron mace, he smote the idol till it burst into pieces.

Luck ob ys the downright striker; from the hollow core,
Fifty times the Brahmins' offer deluged all the floor.

Dwell on the fact that it is always best to be loyal to conviction. Reward does not always come in the shape of money, but come it does inevitably. As soon as Christ had refused to compromise with his tempter, the angels came and ministered to him. Contrast the shuffling conduct of Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings v. 18-19), who asks Elisha to allow him to compromise with his conscience, in order that he may not lose the favour of his master. Note Elisha's contemptuous—"Go in peace."

Quote any examples that occur to you of martyrs who have died rather than yield to those that wished to dictate to their consciences.

Insist that all compromise in morals means loss of power, a disfigurement of that temple of character which we should strive to rear all beautiful.

In every-day life compromises are the imbecilities which pass for wisdom with "practical men." If you accept a compromise you are sowing trouble for yourself. The work which ought to be well done is botched, not finished; and you will have to keep tinkering at it, with infinite annoyance and loss of temper, until, at last, you get it done as it ought to have been done at first.

SUNDAY, JUNE 11th.

DARA: OR, THE WISDOM OF HUMILITY AND THE HUMILITY OF WISDOM.

Read: Judges vi. 11-16; John i. 43-48; Phil. iii. 12-16.

Persia had fallen on evil times. Luxury had rotted away the nobleness and power of its rulers. Money for the extravagances of the court was squeezed out of the long-suffering subjects. Injustice and corruption everywhere. In these days Dara arose, "a shepherd of the hills." He introduced order and good government into his own village. Other villages near placed themselves under his rule and benefitted thereby.

By and by a new king came to the throne, wiser than his predecessors. He heard of Dara, sent for him, made him governor of a whole province. Dara was as successful with his province as he had been with a few villages. The envy of the courtiers was roused. They began to tell the king that whilst Dara was filling the royal chest, he took care that

Some yellow drops, more rich than all the rest,
Went to the filling of his private cup.

They said that wherever Dara went he took with him a chest, "beneath whose weight a camel bent." No one had seen inside this chest, save Dara himself, but it was known that when it was opened, the light of jewels filled his tent. Enraged, the king set out to see and to punish Dara. The Governor met him with the usual ceremonies, and there, sure enough, was a camel with a chest on its back. Proof positive! "Open that chest," said the king. It was done. Nothing in it save a shepherd's vest. The courtiers had the grace to blush. Dara, "open as the sky's blue roof," explained. Part of his speech, thus:

To govern men, lo all the spell I had!
My *soul* in these rude vestments ever clad,
Still to the unstained past kept true and leal.

* * * *

For ruling wisely I should have small skill,
Were I not lord of simple Dara still;
That sceptre kept, I could not lose my way.

Strange dew filled the royal eyes, and two more provinces "blest Dara's sway."

True greatness is ever humble. Success often turns men's heads. Modesty is ever present with noble character. All real, good work—in building up our own characters or in helping others—begins with a wise humility, and however successful, is humbly wise to the end.

SUNDAY, JUNE 18th.

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS: OR, DUTY VERSUS PLEASURE.

Read: Ezek. xxi. 21-23; Jonah i. 1-12; Romans vii. 15-25.

A Dream. To the dreamer came a woman veiled, who said :

My name is Duty, turn and follow me.

There was a chill in the voice. Dreamer, repelled, says he will not follow.

Then another woman, *unveiled*, displaying rare charms, appeared to him.

I am called Pleasure, come with me ! she said.

They went together, hand in hand. The path sloped downward through meads "yellow with sunshine and young green." Dreamer sees nothing, hears nothing, only conscious of "one close joy." A shriek. His companion has caught sight of Death and shrinks with horror. Dreamer seeks to clasp her in his arms, but there was nothing save 'a handful of gray ashes' at his feet. He now seeks to get back to the Parting of the Ways. Notices the road now slopes upward, rocky, abrupt, hard to find. "After long weary days" he stands again at the fork in the road. Again, the woman veiled invites him. Goes with her. Flowery paths of softness gone. Is led through streets of towns, sees Hunger, Idleness, Sin. Weary with these sights, he begs to see the face of his guide, if thereby he may gain inspiration.

A promise is given that he shall see her unveiled, when the "reconciler, he who lifts the veil,—Death" shall appear. After some waiting, death comes, and his guide turns and looks at him unveiled.

And I beheld no face of matron stern,
But that enchantment I had followed erst,
Only more fair—more clear to eye and brain.

Hard lesson to learn, but necessary for all of us. When the road forks to the left, showing green lanes and flowery paths, it needs courage to turn to the right, where the path seems rough and bare. The point is that one begins in promise of beauty, and ends in miserable ugliness; the other promises nothing and gives all.

Choice of ways must be deliberate and thoughtful. Run away from your duty, like Jonah, and sooner or later you will be pitched into a sea of misery and trouble.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25th.

RHOECUS: OR THE WORLD OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF THE WORLD

Read: Psalm xix. ; Matt. vi. 26-30; Gal. v. 16-24.

An old jewel re-set. A legend of old Greece.

A youth, Rhoecus, "wandering in the wood, saw an old oak trembling to its fall." Felt sorry for the oak and propped it up with "admiring care." As he wandered on he heard his name softly called. Turning, bewildered, he saw a shadowy form like a woman, yet "all too fair to be a woman." She was the Dryad of the tree, and anything Rhoecus asked for she would give. The youth answered: "Give me thy love."

Hesitatingly she promised; bade him meet her there an hour before sunset, and was gone. Happy Rhoecus !

Earth seemed to spring beneath him as he walked.

That afternoon he was invited to join some comrades in gambling. As the hour for his appointment with the Dryad drew nigh, a bee buzzed through the window and tried to settle on his ear. He brushed it laughingly away. Thrice it returned, driven away each time with growing wrath of Rhoecus. The bee, wounded in the last repulse, fled through the open window. As the youth glanced after it, he saw the red disc of the setting sun, remembered his promise and rushed away. Too late ! The voice assured him that he had forfeited his bliss for evermore. He pleaded for forgiveness. The voice forgave

Only one word further—"Nevermore"—he heard, and though

Beauty was all around him and delight,
From that eve he was alone on earth.

Keynote of poem: The man who plunges into the dissipations of the world, loses the power to enjoy health-giving communion with Nature.

In his gambling Rhoecus catches a glimpse of old delights that thrilled him when he was a child of nature. Down go the dice. He will return to his simple pleasures. But he can enjoy them nevermore. His taste is vitiated. Gaslight is more in his way now than sunlight. And yet he can enjoy neither !

The careful reader may find other lessons in this poem, *e.g.*, The Retribution of a Broken Promise. The buzzing bee might be taken as the proddings of conscience amid scenes of sinful pleasure, and so on.

JAMES CROSSLEY.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Bows and Arrows.

A PARABLE.

BY DAVID MACRAE.

Gal. iv., 9, Phil. iii., 14, 2 Pet. iii., 18.

Two Kings quarrelled and went to war. The one King brought his army into the field equipped with cannon and breech-loading rifles, and all the newest and best weapons. The other brought into the field a larger army; but the men were all clumsily accoutred in coats of mail, and armed with old-fashioned battle-axes and shields, and bows and arrows.

While they were advancing, the other army opened fire upon them; tore their ranks to pieces; and drove them pell-mell from the field before they came near enough to get their bows and arrows even used. The defeated King fled for protection to his cousin, who was King of another land.

This cousin, who had already heard of his disaster, asked him why he had not equipped his army with modern weapons?

"Because," replied the defeated King, "my forefathers fought with battle-axes, and bows and arrows, winning many glorious victories: and if these weapons were good enough for them, why should they not be good enough for us?"

"Ah!" said his cousin, "many changes have taken place since the days of our forefathers. They, no doubt, used bows and arrows, but they used them because they were the best weapons known in their time. If we would hold our own in these days, we must imitate their wisdom instead of using their weapons. As they equipped their armies with the best weapons of their time, we must equip our armies with the best weapons of our time. We cannot afford to work or fight with weapons that have become old-fashioned, while our enemies are inventing and equipping themselves with arms so much more effective. The better a cause, the worthier is it of the best instruments."

Little Pat and the Parson.

He stands at the door of the church peeping in,
No troublesome beadle is near him;
The preacher is talking of sinners and sin,
And little Pat trembles to hear him;
A poor little fellow alone and forlorn,
Who never knew parent or duty,—
His head is uncover'd, his jacket is torn,
And hunger has withered his beauty.

The white-headed gentleman shut in the box
Seems growing more angry each minute,—
He doubles his fist, and the cushion he knocks,
As if anxious to know what is in it.
He scolds at the people who sit in the pews,—
Pat takes them for kings and princesses.
(With his little bare feet—he delights in their shoes:
In his rags—he feels proud of their dresses!)

The Parson exhorts them to think of their need,
To turn from the world's dissipation,
The naked to clothe and the hungry to feed,—
Pat listens with strong approbation!
And when the old clergyman walks down the aisle,
Pat runs up to meet him right gladly,
"Shure, give me my dinner," says he with a smile,
"And a jacket,—I want them quite badly!"

The kings and princesses indignantly stare,
The beadle gets word of the danger,
And shaking his silver-tipp'd stick in the air,
Look'd knives at the poor little stranger.
But Pat's not afraid, he is sparkling with joy,
And cries—who so willing to cry it?—
"You'll give me my dinner,—I'm *such* a poor boy;
You said so—now *don't* you deny it!"

The pompous old beadle might grumble and glare,
And growl about robbers and arson;
But the boy who has faith in the sermon stands there,
And smiles at the white-headed parson!
The kings and princesses may wonder and frown,
And whisper he wants better teaching;
But the white-headed parson looks tenderly down
On the boy who has faith in his preaching.

He takes him away without question or blame,
As eager as Patsy to press on,
For he thinks a good dinner (and Pat thinks the same)
Is the moral that lies in the lesson.
And after long years, when Pat, handsomely drest—
A smart footman—is asked to determine
Of all earthly things what's the thing he likes best,
He says, "Och! shure, the master's ould sermin.

A. B. S.

Midland Church Calendar for June.

ATHERSTONE: Unitarian Chapel.
Minister: Rev. J. Howard, of Tamworth. Service at 3 p.m.

BIRMINGHAM: Church of the Messiah, Broad Street.
Ministers: Revs. Dr. Crosskey, 117, Gough Road; and James Crossley, 5, Wyndham Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: June 25th, Annual Sermons and Collections for Graham Street Schools—Rev. C. C. Coe.

BIRMINGHAM: The Hurst Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. W. J. Clarke, 160, Pershore Road.
Services: 10-15, 2-45, and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Fazeley Street Mission.
Minister: Rev. T. Pipe, 59, Gt. Brook Street. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: June 11th, Floral Service for Children entitled "Wild Flowers."

BIRMINGHAM: The Newhall Hill Church.
Minister: Rev. A. A. Charlesworth, Claremont Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

BIRMINGHAM: The Old Meeting Church.
Minister: Rev. Joseph Wood, 120, Gough Road, Edgbaston. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: June 18th, Sunday School Anniversary; Preacher, Rev. W. Copeland Bowie

BIRMINGHAM: The Church of the Saviour.
Minister: The Rev. J. C. Street, 19, Charlotte Road, Edgbaston.
Services: 11 and 6-30.

BANBURY: Christ Church, Horsefair.
Minister: Rev. H. Hill. Service: Evening, 6-30.
Special: June 4th, "Eternal Punishment." June 11th, "Eternal Hope." June 18th, "God and Punishment." June 25th, "At Peace with God."

COSELEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. Henry Eachus. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

CRADLEY: Netherend Chapel.
Minister: Rev. A. E. O'Connor. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special: June 18th, Children's Flower Service.

DUDLEY: The Old Meeting House.
Minister: Vacant. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

EVESHAM: Oak Street Meeting House.
Minister: Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A., 9, Albert Road. Services: 11 and 6-30.
Special:

Midland Church Calendar for June.—*(Continued.)*

KIDDERMINSTER :
Minister : Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans. Services : 10-30 and 6-30.
Special :

KINGSWOOD : Kingswood Chapel, Hollywood.
Minister : Rev. J. Hardinge Matthews. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special : June 4th, Special Service for Young People at 3 p.m.

OLDBURY : Unitarian Meeting House.
Minister : Rev. Henry McKean, The Dingle, Oldbury. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

SHREWSBURY : High Street Church.
Minister : Rev. E. Myers, F.G.S., Claremont Hill. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

STOURBRIDGE : Presbyterian Chapel.
Minister : Rev. A. W. Timmis. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

TAMWORTH : Cole Hill Chapel.
Minister : Rev. J. Howard, 17, Aldergate. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

THE LYE : Unitarian Chapel.
Minister : Rev. I. Wrigley, B.A. Service : 6-30.
Special : Anniversary Sermons, June 11th. Afternoon at 3, Rev. J. C. Street ; Evening Rev. A. W. Timmis.

WALSALL : Unitarian Free Church.
Minister : Rev. Peter Dean, 3, Sandwell Street. Services : 11-15 and 6-30.
Special :

WEST BROMWICH : Lodge Road Chapel.
Minister : Rev. John Harrison, Jesson Street. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

WHITCHURCH : Church of the Saviour, Highgate.
Minister : Rev. George Eyre Evans, 5, Mill Street.
Services : 11, 2-15 for Children, 6-30.
Special : Church open daily for private prayer and rest.

WOLVERHAMPTON : Unity Church, Snow Hill.
Minister : Rev. L. G. Harris Crook, Oaklands Road. Services : 11 and 6-30.
Special :

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